



## The Potential Health Care Cost of Not Breastfeeding

Everytime a child is ill, the working parent faces increased stress. This stress can be transferred to the work place through employees who are absent or distracted, and thus less productive. Labor statistics report that it can cost up to \$360 each day a \$15 per hour employee is off work caring for a sick child.

Initiatives promoting healthy children can improve the productivity, morale, and profitability of a business. They can also protect and improve the health of adult employees by decreasing the spread of infectious disease. Breastfeeding is one way in which infants and children can be protected from and strengthened against many common childhood infectious diseases.

This fact sheet outlines the potential costs for pediatric care for these diseases--costs that could be significantly decreased if the infant is breastfed.

### Allergies

Food allergies are often triggered by proteins the infant is unable to digest. The infant with a family history of respiratory or food allergies is at higher risk for a severe reaction due to an immature immune system.

Breastfed infants and children have a significantly lower risk for food allergies, especially cow's milk and other protein reactions, and are often protected from other respiratory allergies due to immunological factors in breastmilk. For each allergic child:

- ☐ Treatment cost + \$400 (diagnosis and treatment)
- ☐ \$80 to \$100 (acute reaction treatment)
- ☐ Days off for employee = 1 to 2 per severe reaction.

### Bronchitis/Pneumonia

This can start as a mild lung infection, often from contact with large number of other children. As it increases in severity, it can cause high fevers, breathing creases severity, it can cause high fevers, breathing difficulties, and lead to hospitalization. In the US, treatment for such infections cost more than \$19 million annually. Breastfed children have an 80% decrease in risk for lower respiratory infections. For each episode of bronchitis or pneumonia:

- ☐ Treatment cost = \$60 to \$80 (unhospitalized)
- ☐ \$4,600 to \$5,000 (hospitalized)
- ☐ Days off for employee = 2 to 7.

### Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Pooling of sweet liquids around the gums and teeth can cause damage or loss of the front teeth. This often happens when the child is put to bed with a bottle of sweet liquid (e.g., milk and juice) or sips these liquids constantly from a bottle during the day.

Breastfed infants and children are a very low risk for baby bottle tooth decay because the infant is typically not at the breast long enough for significant pooling to occur. For each episode of baby bottle tooth decay:

- ☐ Treatment cost = \$250 (teeth cleaning and repair)
- ☐ \$3,000 (total reconstruction and replacement of front teeth).
- ☐ Days off for employee = 1 to 4.

### Diabetes Mellitus

Infants and children genetically susceptible may become insulin-dependent around age 7 or 8. Nationally, about 120,000 children are affected by Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus (IDDM). However, only 5 or 6 per 1,000 genetically susceptible children develop this disease. Current research postulates that the early introduction of inappropriate proteins (especially those found in cow's milk) may trigger the development of IDDM. Children with IDDM are more susceptible to infections than IDDM adults or non-affected children.

Breastfed infants and children are at reduced risk for developing IDDM, especially those given only breastmilk for the first several months. For each child with IDDM (annually):

- ☐ Treatment cost = \$3,000 to \$5,000 (for office visits, insulin and supplies, with no complications or additional infections.).
- ☐ Days off for employee = 5 to 15.
- ☐ Increased risk of emergency calls away from work.
- ☐ May leave labor force to care for child.



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